

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "The 'Three Rs' of Compromise" (Colossians 3:16-17, Deuteronomy 17:14-20)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 7/20/2014

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At the end of our last broadcast, as we continued our consideration of the Biblical doctrine of separation, we read a passage of Scripture in the book of Deuteronomy, and I want to return to that passage for deeper consideration today. There is much for the people of God to learn there.

But first, I want to return your attention once again to the passage of Scripture that has been the theme or the anchor for this series of messages, in Colossians chapter 3 beginning at verse 16. In Colossians chapter 3 beginning at verse 16 we have these commands given to us by God the Holy Spirit through the authorship of the Apostle Paul:

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

As I have said many times in this series of messages, the key to Biblical separation is the Bible. We cannot be truly separated unto God and separated from spiritual compromise with this present evil world unless we are reading and studying and absorbing and applying the Word of God. The Word of God must dwell richly within the believer. Literally, in the original language, the Word of God must have unrestricted access and influence in the life of every believer individually, and in the life of the true Church as the body of Christ.

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And in our last message we saw that this is not a new commandment, a new imperative in the revelation of God, when we come to the book of Colossians in the New Testament. This is an imperative that we find from the very earliest chapters of the Word of God. We saw this at the end of our last message.

God's Command to Israel's Kings

Turn with me once again to the book of Deuteronomy, to chapter 17, beginning at verse 14. Deuteronomy chapter 17, beginning at verse 14. Later on in this passage we find essentially the same command that we find in Colossians chapter 3. But first, God sets the stage for this command.

At the time of history that is recorded for us in Deuteronomy chapter 17, the nation of Israel was still in the wilderness. They had not yet entered and taken possession of the Promised Land. The nation was still under the direct leadership of God through His servant Moses. But God tells the people, even before they enter the Promised Land, that a time will come when they will desire to have a king like the other nations around them.

Now God said that He would permit this. But He said that it must be under His sovereignty and by His authority. And so the Lord said this, in Deuteronomy chapter 17 beginning at verse 14:

When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you,
and possess it and dwell in it, and say, "I will set a king over me like all

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the nations that are around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

And so, God specified for the people the nature of the king that they were to have over them. He was not to be a foreigner. He was to be a king of God's own choosing. And then the Lord then said this about the way in which that king was to conduct the affairs of the nation. Deuteronomy chapter 17, verse 16:

But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, "You shall not return that way again."

And then in the next verse, the Lord specifies how the king is to conduct himself personally and in his own household. Deuteronomy chapter 17, verse 17:

Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

Now in these verses we have the Old Testament equivalent of the command that the New Testament Christian is given in Colossians chapter 3, verse 17:

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

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The king of Israel was to be a man of God who relied upon God in every aspect of his thinking and his living. The king of Israel was to be an individual who gave to the nation the supreme example of separation unto God, and separation from the pagan world.

This was to be true in both his personal conduct as an individual and in his household, and in his public conduct as the leader of the people. There was to be no compartmentalization. Whatever he was to do, in everything, it was all to be to the glory of God and to be worthy of the name of God, and to be done in thankfulness for the provision of God.

The "Three Rs" of Compromise

And as I mentioned at the end of our last broadcast, the very areas that God dealt with in this passage in Deuteronomy are the areas or categories of all sinful compromises that we find not only throughout the Word of God, but likewise in the subsequent history of the church up to the present day.

It happens that we can name those three categories with words that all begin with the same letter of the English alphabet. We find compromise in relationships, compromise in religion, and compromise regarding resources. Relationships, religion, and resources. We might legitimately refer to this as the "three Rs" of compromise.

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Compromise in Relationships

First of all, God said to the kings of Israel, and He says to every believer in Christ, "Do not compromise in the area of relationships." Don't have someone who is an unbeliever leading you or ruling over you spiritually. Don't have that kind of relationship.

You see, that kind of relationship has spiritual consequences. And we see those kinds of relationships among many professing Christians today. Many of them are looking to unbelieving political leaders and talk-show pundits to tell them how to think and how to live, instead of looking to the Word of God. And within the visible church today, many professing Christians are following spiritual leaders who are in fact unbelievers.

They are not men of God's choosing, they are men of the world's choosing. They are charlatans. They are ministers of Satan. The words that they speak are not the words of God.

And many churches today have compromised in their relationship with the world by adopting the attitude that the church must redefine itself in order to be acceptable in the eyes of the unbelieving world, attractive to the unbelieving world. And so we have churches today that are actually entering into a relationship with the unbelieving world in which they go to the unbelieving world to ask what the church should look like, how the church should worship, what the church should teach, how the church should be organized, what programs the

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church should have. Much of the church today is entering into such ungodly relationships.

And furthermore, many individual professing Christians today are entering into personal relationships with unbelievers that are spiritually destructive. Many professing Christians today do not see what is wrong with marrying an unbeliever. But God tells us in First Corinthians chapter 6 and elsewhere that we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

In the same way, the Kings of ancient Israel were commanded not to take unbelieving wives. Solomon was the greatest recorded violator of this command of God. We are told in Second Kings that he had a thousand pagan wives and concubines who turned his heart away from the one true and living God and turned his heart to their false gods, their demonic gods.

And dear friends, this principle applies not only to marriage with unbelievers, it applies to any other kind of spiritual relationship or partnership with an unbeliever. The area of relationships is usually the area of our lives in which spiritual compromise begins.

You don't want to risk breaking a friendship. You don't want to risk appearing to be disagreeable. You don't want to have to say, "No," to someone when they want you to enter into their sinful ways. And it may not just be a sinful activity, it may be a sinful way of thinking. But because you want to appear to be an

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agreeable person, you compromise. And you rationalize that compromise by saying to yourself, "What harm can this one little compromise possibly have?"

I have no doubt that Solomon may have thought that when he entered into a treaty with Pharaoh and married his pagan daughter. What harm can this possibly do? In fact, he apparently was thinking. "Look at the great good that it can do for my kingdom." But it wasn't long before Solomon had not one foreign wife, not one pagan wife, but literally a thousand pagan wives. And those relationships led him, as we shall see, in two other kinds of serious compromise that devastated not only his own household but also the entire nation.

You see, even small compromise with the world in one area of living or thinking can affect many other areas of our living and our thinking. Perhaps that affect won't be apparent immediately. Perhaps you will think that you are getting away with compromise. Perhaps you will think that compromise is actually accomplishing something good.

But we must look at these things from God's point of view. All spiritual compromise is sin, because all spiritual compromise violates God's clear commands. And God has established these clear commands because He is the one who knows the end from the beginning.

The all-wise God knows His creatures. He knows our sin natures. He knows that compromise in one area of our thinking and living will eventually affect all

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other areas of our thinking and living. Compromise in other areas most often comes because we first become ensnared in ungodly relationships.

Compromise Regarding Resources

And then secondly, in Deuteronomy chapter 17, God commanded the kings of Israel not to compromise with the unbelieving world regarding resources. God told the kings of Israel not to go to the pagan nations to obtain the resources that were necessary to support and sustain the kingdom. In Solomon's case, he very directly violated God's command by going to Egypt and the other pagan nations for the chariots and horses and other resources that were, as he thought, necessary for military power and military strength. He also went to the pagan nations to accumulate personal wealth. In other words, Solomon sought strength from the arm of flesh instead of from the arm of God as God had commanded.

In our time, the church has its own equivalent of those chariots and horses. Much of the church today is seeking to accumulate the trappings of the world in order to be attractive to the world. In many places today, the church service is not a service for the worship of God, it is a multimedia production for the worship of man. Man is the focal point. The trappings of the flesh are the focal point.

And why has this happened? It has happened first of all because so many churches today have entered into a relationship in which the spiritually polluted tastes of the unbelieving world dictate what is done inside the church building.

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You see, relationships matter. Spiritual separation matters. And what has happened in so many once-sound churches today is that so many unbelievers have been brought into the congregation, without hearing the genuine Gospel of Christ, without being confronted regarding their sin and their need of salvation from the wrath of God, and so in many places the unsaved have come to numerically dominate the church congregation.

And soon, the natural course of events is that some of these people are recruited into leadership positions in the church. The church ends up with the unsaved in the leadership. And these unsaved people in the leadership of the church are not going to seek the resources of God to build His church, they are going to seek the resources of the world, because they are natural men, not spiritual men.

And so the church, no matter how architecturally fine it may be, no matter how polished a production it may put on each Sunday, no matter how many programs it may have, the so-called church is a failure. It is nothing more than a social club that uses religious language.

Compromise in relationships within the church leads to compromise regarding the resources the church decides to use. It leads the church to reject God's powerful resources in favor of man's weak resources. It leads people to forget, just as the early Corinthian church forgot, as we are told in First Corinthians chapter 1, that

the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For as it is written:

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"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."...

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom [its false wisdom] did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

For the Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom [in other words, they are interested in the trappings and not the substance]; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

Christians, we must not compromise in the area of relationships, and we must not compromise in the area of resources.

Compromise Regarding Religion

And thirdly, in Deuteronomy chapter 17, the kings of Israel were commanded not to compromise regarding religion. They were not to follow after the false gods of the pagan nations.

Once again, Solomon was one of the greatest recorded violators of this direct

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command of God. He brought the worship of all sorts of other gods into the nation of Israel alongside of the worship of the one true and living God. And it was not long before the worship of the one true and living God was overrun and largely cast aside in favor of the worship of these demonic gods. Parents literally sacrificed their children in the fire to the pagan god Molech.

And we find that several hundred years later, under the rule of King Josiah, that Josiah had to take action to eradicate the horrible worship of Molech that was still continuing, an abomination that had been first instituted under the leadership of Solomon because he compromised by marrying pagan wives centuries earlier.

Dear friends, today many parents who profess to be Christians are sacrificing their children in the spiritual fires of paganism by remaining in visible churches that are no longer true to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. They go for the programs. They go for the entertainment. They go for the outward trappings. But there is no spiritual life, because the church with which they are associated is but a shell of a church, a spiritually dead and defeated church, living in comfortable compromise with the unbelieving world.

How Is It With You?

Dear friend, how is it with you? Are you spiritually compromised in the area of relationships? Are you or your church involved in relationships that are displeasing to God and that are damaging you or your church spiritually?

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Are you or your church spiritually compromised in the area of resources? Are you making compromises in your life and in your thinking because you have been deceived into thinking that those compromises are necessary in order to have the success that you seek? Are you compromising in the area of resources because you think that worldly resources are necessary in order to accomplish spiritual objectives?

Are you compromising in the area of religion because you think that is necessary in order for you or your church to be acceptable in the eyes of the world?

Dear friend, Satan wants to deceive us in these things. Satan wants to create the spiritual vacuum in our lives and our churches into which he can rush with all of his evils. Those who are truly God's people must repent of these sins.

In Deuteronomy chapter 17, God gave the kings of Israel the great safeguard against these evil compromises in the areas of relationships, resources, and religion. He told the kings of Israel that it was their responsibility to make their very own written copy of the Word of God from the master copy that was kept by the Levites.

Now we are not told that we are to make our own personal handwritten copy of the Word of God. But we are told, in Colossians chapter 3, that the Word of God, the Word of Christ, must dwell richly within us if we are to be separated from this present evil world and separated unto our holy and living God.

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Are you in the Word, dear friend? Are you submitting to the Word? Are you willing for the Word of God to point the finger at those places in your life in which you are living and thinking in spiritual compromise, and you need to separate yourself under your holy God? That is your responsibility. And if you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, He will lead you and enable you to live the spiritually uncompromised and uncompromising life that pleases Him and will be used by Him for His glory.

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